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HERSETH SANDLIN INTRODUCES BILL TO IMPROVE NATIVE AMERICAN SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Washington, DC (September 28, 2010) – Today, U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin introduced bipartisan legislation to ensure a focus on Native American small businesses at the Small Business Administration (SBA). Her legislation would elevate the existing Office of Native American Affairs at the SBA by making sure its Director reports directly to the head of the SBA. Doing so will enhance the Office's mission by raising the profile of Native American businesses within the SBA. Also sponsoring the legislation is Representative Tom Cole of Oklahoma, Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus, with whom Herseth Sandlin partnered to pass the Tribal Law and Order Act through the House of Representatives and into law.

"This bill will increase accountability and opportunity at the Small Business Administration so that tribes and entrepreneurs can get the assistance for small businesses the Small Business Administration was meant to ensure," Herseth Sandlin said. "Jobs and entrepreneurship are keys to the future success of tribal communities and by creating a direct relationship between the Office of Native American Affairs and the SBA Administrator, this bill should help foster economic development and job creation in tribal communities facing high levels of unemployment."

The goal of SBA's Office of Native American Affairs is to promote and support Native American entrepreneurs. They engage in numerous outreach activities including tribal consultations, development and distribution of promotional materials, attendance and participation in national economic development conferences. However, Native Americans live with poverty rates of 26 percent nationally and disproportionately high unemployment, more needs to be done to focus attention and resources on Native American entrepreneurs. For example, unemployment rates on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations approach 85 percent.

Herseth Sandlin's legislation is also cosponsored by Dale Kildee (D-MI), Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus in the House, and by Don Young (R-AK).

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